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C O N F I D E N T I A L SKOPJE 000558

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE AND EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/15/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#) [TU](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA DETERMINED TO SIGN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
WITH TURKEY

Ref: A) STATE 92018
B) ANKARA 1572

CLASSIFIED BY: CDA Tom Navratil for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Charge called on FonMin Milososki Sept. 3 to press on ref a demarche asking Macedonia to postpone signing a strategic partnership agreement with Turkey. While the U.S. welcomes such an agreement and strong Macedonia-Turkey ties, the timing -- just prior to UNGA and with the Nimetz process at a critical stage -- would unavoidably feed Greek fears that its two neighbors were forming a sinister alliance against it, making it that much more difficult to achieve success in the name talks. This -- combined with other GoM actions such as its letter campaigns related to the Macedonian minority in Greece -- is creating a view in Washington and other capitals that Macedonia is not being constructive.

¶2. (C) Milososki responded that the agreement is a done deal: the only reasons it was not signed earlier were related to domestic political problems in Turkey. PMs Erdogan and Gruevski have discussed it and agreed their FonMins should sign it during Milososki's upcoming visit to Ankara (other MFA sources here tell us the date is Sept. 17).

¶3. (C) While Milososki agreed to convey our concerns to Gruevski, he strongly defended the agreement, asserting that its substance is innocuous, Greece-Turkey ties are improving anyway, and that the deal should only inspire Athens to seek better ties with Skopje, which he would welcome. He said the GoM would consider making a public statement that they would like to sign a similar agreement with Greece when possible. Milososki agreed to consider taking other steps to ameliorate Greek concerns, such as sending his ambassador in Athens in to MFA the day of the signing to present the document and respond to Greek concerns. Charge responded that while a postponement would be far better, such steps to reach out to the Greek side would probably help somewhat.

NAVRATIL